NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND DECISION RECORD
UPPER CLOVER FIRE (X-181)
BLM/EK/PL2001/055

Finding of No Significant Impact:

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Supplement Environmental Assessment BLM/EK/PL2000/055, I have determined that the proposed action will not have significant impacts on the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Decision:

It is my decision to implement the Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan (NFRP) Supplement as described in the Environmental Assessment for the Upper Clover Fire BLM/PL2000/055. Approximately 1,193 acres of public rangeland managed by the Bureau of Land Management Elko Field Office and 800 acres of private land were burned during this fire. Approximately 254 acres of the burned public land will be rehabilitated by planting of a multiple species seed rangeland mixture and approximately 387 acres will be seeded with a multiple species wildlife seed mixture. Approximately 1 mile of new fence will be constructed in order to establish grazing closures to rest rehabilitated areas. The 1 mile of proposed new fence line and 254 acres proposed for drill seeding will be inventoried for cultural resources. Monitoring for noxious weed invasion in the burned and disturbed areas will be conducted and treatments will be applied if weeds are detected. Post-fire grazing management, including the period of time needed for closure, will be determined based on monitoring and achievement of site specific resource objectives.

Rationale:

Implementation of the proposed action described in the NFRP Supplement EA for the Upper Clover Fire will protect soils in the burned area, including preventing potential loss of soil due to wind and water erosion; will reduce potential invasion and establishment of non-native, invasive weeds; will provide quality forage for livestock and wildlife; and will facilitate meeting established standards and guidelines for livestock grazing.

The Elko Resource Management Plan (RMP) is silent for the proposed action. The proposed action is consistent with the objectives of the RMP and is consistent with federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and plans to the maximum extent possible

Monitoring:

Post-treatment monitoring studies will be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed treatments and to determine the time frame for reopening lands for grazing.

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Helen Hankins Date
Elko Field Office

NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
UPPER CLOVER FIRE (X-181)
BLM/EK/PL-2001/055

Introduction:

This Supplement Environmental Assessment (EA) tiers to the Elko Field Office FY 2000 Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Environmental Assessment (NRFPEA) BLM/EK/PL2000/037. The Proposed Action includes NFRPEA Treatment # 1 (Construction and repair of fence to facilitate grazing closure), 2 (Planting of multiple species seed mixtures), 8 (Invasive, nonnative weed species control) and 10 (Cultural resource site stabilization and rehabilitation). The format of this Supplement EA follows the outline in the Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Handbook, BLM Manual Handbook H-1742-1 dated July 27, 1999.

List of Preparers:

Tom Warren	Emergency Stabilization Rehabilitation Manager
Donna Nyrehn	Rangeland Management Specialist
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Rick Driggs	Engineering Technician
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Project Area Description:

A. Fire Description:

The fire was started by a lightning strike and was reported on July 4, 2001 and was declared out on July 5, 2001. It burned 1,193 acres of public land and 800 acres of private land. Two grazing allotments were affected: Little Humboldt and Squaw Valley. Both of these allotments contain both private and public land. This fire affected only a small percentage of each of these allotments. No structures burned in this fire, but approximately 1 mile of private fence burned around the Upper Clover Ranch. Approximately 0.7 miles of allotment boundary fence burned. Overall, the burn severity was moderate.

B. Vegetation and Soil Description:

The burned area ranges in elevation from 4,700 feet to 4,780 feet. Soils are composed of loam, very cobbly loam, gravelly loam, silt loam, and very fine sandy loam. Predominant range sites on the burned public land are Loamy 8-10" and Droughty Loam 8-10". Predominant range sites on private land are Sodic Terrace 6-8" and 8-10', Loamy Bottom 8-14", and Wet Meadow.

There would be increased wind and water erosion until vegetation is reestablished. The water erosion should be small due to gentle slopes. Seeding and grazing closure would reduce potential wind and water erosion hazards.

Vegetation in the burned area of the Squaw Valley Allotment is composed predominately of cheatgrass, Wyoming big sagebrush, bottlebrush squirreltail, Sandberg's bluegrass, and greasewood. Most of the burned area in the Little Humboldt Allotment is crested wheatgrass and cheatgrass. The majority of the private land which burned was native grass hay meadow.

Proposed Project Treatments:

A. Revegetation:

1. Rangeland drill seeding with aerial overseeding:

Approximately 254 acres in the Squaw Valley Allotment would be drill seeded with Siberian wheatgrass, Hycrest and Nordan crested wheatgrass, and Boizoisky Russian wildrye in the fall. Forage kochia would be aerially broadcast as an overseed. The aerial application would be made between late October through December. If possible, seed would be broadcast on snow to aid in germination and reduce seed consumption by rodents and birds.

2. Wildlife seeding:

Approximately 387 acres within a 774 acre block (every other swath) would be aerially seeded with forage kochia, Basin big sagebrush, Wyoming big sagebrush, and Western yarrow. This area is critical mule deer winter range. Reseeding with shrub and forbs would help improve the forage value for wintering deer in the area.

3. Invasive, nonnative weed control:

If noxious weeds are detected during and after fire rehabilitation efforts, appropriate Integrated Pest Management (IPM) control measures would be implemented to control the invasion.

B. Structures:

1. Fencing:

Approximately 1 miles of new fence would be constructed to allow closure of seeded and burned areas to grazing for a period to be determined by post-rehabilitation monitoring. The fences are needed to protect the proposed range and wildlife seeding treatment to allow for vegetation to reestablish.

C. Erosion Control Treatments: None

D. Site Preparation: None

E Other:

1. Cultural resource inventories:

Cultural resource inventories would be conducted along the 1 miles of proposed new fence. Cultural resource inventory would also be conducted on the 254 acres proposed for drill seeding. These inventories would identify any cultural resources that might need to be protected during rehabilitation treatments.

Consideration of Critical Elements and Resources:

The following critical elements of the human environment are not present or are not affected by the proposed action or alternative:

ACECs
Environmental Justice
Farmlands, prime or unique
Floodplains
Wastes, hazardous/solid
Water Quality, surface/ground
Wetlands/Riparian Zones
Wild and Scenic Rivers
Wilderness

Critical elements and resources brought forward for analysis:

A. Air Quality:

The burned area is highly susceptible to wind erosion until revegetation occurs. Wind erosion can increase Particulate Matter #10 (PM#10) emissions causing exceedence of PM #10 air quality standards which can negatively affect human health. In addition, airborne dust can cause visibility and safety problems on roads in the area. The proposed seeding and fencing treatments would encourage regrowth of vegetation, thus reducing future potential air quality impacts.

B. Cultural Resources:

The Upper Clover Fire occurred within an area known to archaeologists as the Central Great Basin which has been inhabited by humans for approximately 12,000 years. Archaeological sites and cultural properties in this area must be afforded protection whenever possible. Section 106 of the Natural Historic Preservation Act mandates that the federal government will account for cultural resources in its projects and undertakings, including fire rehabilitation efforts. Ground disturbing activities such as drill seeding and fence construction could damage cultural sites. Therefore, areas designated for potential ground disturbance would be inventoried for cultural resources before the disturbance occurs in accordance with the State Protocol Agreement Between BLM, Nevada and the Nevada State Office of Historic Preservation (SHPO). At a minimum, to reduce potential impacts to cultural resources, activities that involve mechanized surface disturbance of less than 10 cm depth would generally have transect spacing of 100 meters. More intense inventory would be used for highly sensitive areas. If surface disturbance is greater than 10 cm, 30 meter transect intervals would be used.

All cultural resources discovered or relocated would be plotted on maps and at a minimum would be recorded on the Nevada IMACS short form. Resources except those previously determined not eligible, by BLM and SHPO, or that have been fully mitigated, would be flagged for avoidance and avoided during rehabilitation activities. Flagging would be placed to minimize the potential for looting and vandalism and be removed as soon as possible.

C. Native American Religious Concerns:

Native Americans would be consulted as appropriate prior to any ground disturbing activities. If traditional cultural properties or other areas having traditional or religious significance to Native Americans are discovered as a result of this consultation, then BLM would insure that measures are taken to avoid or reduce impacts to these areas of concern to Native Americans.

D. Visual Resources:

A small portion of the burned area is within Visual Resource Management Class III. The majority of the burned area is within Visual Resource Management Class IV and changes in this class should be subordinate to the existing landscape. The fire, as well as recent fires in the immediate vicinity, has resulted in visual impacts to the area. Revegetation efforts are designed to blend into the background without attracting undue attention and aid in restoring the area to a more characteristic landscape. The proposed new fencing, drill and aerial seeding would be in conformance with the management objectives for Class IV.

E. Wildlife:

Approximately 774 acres of critical mule deer winter range and approximately 508 acres of antelope year-long range (with an emphasis on importance as antelope winter range) were

impacted by the fire. Overall, there are approximately 100 bird species, 70 mammal species and several reptile and amphibian species that can be found in sagebrush habitats on the allotment. The area provides habitat for many of these species. Wildlife was adversely impacted by the Upper Clover Fire primarily through temporary loss of habitat and through removal of vegetation by the fire. The proposed rehabilitation treatments include resting the area from livestock grazing and seeding critical mule deer winter range. This would benefit wildlife by helping to restore critical forage and cover more quickly.

F. Grazing:

The proposed closures to grazing within the burned area would protect seeding efforts. Grazing closure would also improve future forage conditions for both livestock and wildlife. However, grazing closure and relocation of livestock would have some short term adverse impacts on ranchers in the area who normally use the allotments for grazing. The actual AUM losses suffered by ranchers have not been determined at this point. Through field inventories and monitoring, GIS analyses, and consultation, cooperation, and coordination with individual permittees, specific rest periods and other grazing management options would be identified to reduce impacts to ranchers where possible.

G. Invasive, Nonnative Species:

Fire suppression efforts, including use of engines and other mechanized vehicles, had the potential to introduce noxious weed species seeds into the burned area. In order to reduce the potential impacts of an invasion of noxious weeds, monitoring should be conducted after rehabilitation treatments are completed. If noxious weeds are discovered to have invaded the burn area, herbicide treatments would need to be implemented to reduce the spread of the noxious weeds. The proposed weed monitoring would help to prevent or reduce any such noxious weed invasion of the Upper Clover burn area.

H. Threatened, Endangered, Candidate, or Sensitive Species:

The area provides habitat for the bald eagle, a Federally-listed Threatened Species. The area also provides habitat for golden eagles, burrowing owls, Swainson's hawks and ferruginous hawks, which are State of Nevada Listed Species. Nevada BLM policy is to provide State of Nevada Listed and BLM Sensitive Species with the same level of protection as is provided for candidate species to prevent further listings as threatened or endangered. The proposed action would not likely affect any other BLM Special Status Species of plants or animals. The proposed seeding treatments and rest from grazing pressure are designed to help restore sagebrush habitat and/or reduce the impacts from the invasion or reinvasion of fire prone annual weeds. The artificial seeding of big sagebrush would help ensure that these species are on site as future seed sources, and to provide cover and forage, in the event that natural sources were lost due to the fire and natural recovery is slow. Prey species for bald eagle and the State of Nevada Listed Species would be able to more fully utilize the burn area with big sagebrush cover. Otherwise, many

areas on the burn would likely be avoided by the prey species until a semblance of shrubs naturally reestablish.

I.. Migratory Birds:

The proposed restorative actions are located in a sagebrush habitat type. The Nevada Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plan identifies the following bird species associated with this physiographic region: sage grouse (obligate), black rosy finch, ferruginous hawk, gray flycatcher, loggerhead shrike,
vesper sparrow, prairie falcon, sage sparrow, sage thrasher, Swainson's hawk, burrowing owl, calliope hummingbird, Brewer's sparrow, Western meadowlark, black-throated sparrow, lark sparrow, green-tailed towhee, Brewer's blackbird, horned lark, and lark sparrow.

Maintaining complete, diverse sagebrush communities is integral to conservation efforts for these species. Low elevation sagebrush sites, such as the project area, are vulnerable to conversion to cheatgrass types following wildfire. Wyoming and Basin big sagebrush vegetation types generally do not naturally respond well to block burn configurations, such as what occurred on the burn, where only relatively small intact stands still exist. Basin big sagebrush seed banks (viable residual seed dispersed last fall and winter) were likely lost as a result of the fire within the large block. Wyoming big sagebrush seed banks usually do not persist after the summer following seed dispersal in unburned areas, let alone burned areas. Recruitment would be slow from intact stands without rehabilitation. The proposed action to seed the area with two big sagebrush species, forage kochia, and Western yarrow would help to provide wildlife cover and forage and compete with any potential site-specific establishment of exotic annual plant species. This should provide beneficial impacts to these species and is consistent with the conservation measures listed in Section 3(e) of the President's Migratory Bird Executive Order.

Project Cost Summary: (the cost summary information can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the Elko 14 Fire Complex)

Project Maps: (project maps can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the Elko 14 Fire Complex)

Cost/Risk Assessment: (the cost/risk assessment can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the Elko 14 Fire Complex)

Native/Nonnative Worksheet: (the native/nonnative worksheet can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the Elko 14 Fire Complex)